

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this](#) [page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 07BAGHDAD360, UK DEFENSE SECRETARY SAYS HMG WILL DRAWDOWN, AND

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#07BAGHDAD360**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07BAGHDAD360	2007-02-03 13:48	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Baghdad

Appears in these articles:

<http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/wikileaks/Wikleaks-US-anger-at-Gordon.6779840.jp>
<http://news.scotsman.com/iraq/Wikleaks-Gordon-Brown-39wanted-to.6779847.jp>
<http://news.scotsman.com/iraq/Wikleaks-Iraqi-premier-feared-British.6779849.jp>
<http://news.scotsman.com/iraq/Wikleaks-Tories-asked-to-oppose.6779848.jp>
<http://news.scotsman.com/opinion/Leader-Historical-insight.6779771.jp>

VZCZCXRO7181
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0360/01 0341348
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 031348Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9393
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000360

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2017

TAGS: [PINS](#) [PNAT](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: UK DEFENSE SECRETARY SAYS HMG WILL DRAWDOWN, AND
IRAN IS A MENACE

REF: A. BAGHDAD 0328

1B. BAGHDAD 0257

1C. BAGHDAD 0229

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: On January 29, UK Secretary of State for Defense, Des Browne told the Ambassador that HMG remains committed to the mission in Iraq, but would need to drawdown its force strength in the coming months. He promised that London would coordinate this downsizing with us. The Ambassador emphasized the importance of British forces maintaining a strong presence in central Basra. Browne expressed concern with Iranian interference in Iraq, agreeing that the time was right to ratchet up the pressure on Tehran. At the same time, he supported a dialogue with Iran, if Tehran undertook some confidence building steps first. END SUMMARY.

UK to Drawdown Forces

12. (S) On January 29, UK Secretary of State for Defense Des Browne told the Ambassador that HMG is planning to withdraw a significant number of its troops in the coming months. Browne explained the entire UK force is no larger than the US Marine Corps and that it is stressed by service in Iraq and Afghanistan. It can no longer sustain the current tempo. Furthermore, he said, the UK is increasing its force size in Afghanistan because they believe there is a real opportunity to defeat the Taliban and stabilize the south in the next several months. He said that the increase in Afghanistan would need to be counterbalanced by a reduction of troops in Iraq. Browne added that the growing dissatisfaction with the war among the British population was also putting pressure on the government to drawdown.

13. (S) Browne said the MND-SE commander would coordinate closely with the Coalition to ensure the transition goes smoothly and Basra remains stable. He assured the Ambassador that the UK would maintain its presence in Basra, but noted that London had yet to finalize its plan. The Ambassador said Washington was eager to receive the details of the plan, noting that the change will affect the U.S. presence in the area. The Ambassador said he needed to consider the British plans as we determine how best to protect U.S. civilians working in the Basra Palace.

14. (S) Browne said the US should not focus on the British reduction in terms of troop numbers. While the downsizing would result in the closure of forward operating bases and other facilities around Basra, Browne argued that remaining British forces would still conduct critical missions in the center of Basra, such as training and supporting the ISF and having quick reaction forces stationed for emergencies. The Ambassador stressed the importance of the UK maintaining a solid presence in the center of Basra, noting that the Coalition does not want the enemy to think we have given up. He said that Prime Minister Maliki also wants to have the UK remain in Basra, the second most important city in Iraq. Browne committed to take this message back to London.

Near Term Steps to Change Iranian Behavior

15. (S) Browne told the Ambassador that HMG is gravely concerned with malign Iranian-sponsored activities in Iraq, adding that steps must be taken to disrupt and diminish them. He said Iran was targeting UK soldiers, providing training to militias, and smuggling weapons into Iraq. The Ambassador agreed, outlining his ideas for a near term way forward to change Iranian behavior.

16. (S) When the Ambassador said that MNF-I spokesman Major General Caldwell intended to hold a press conference offering evidence of Iranian activity in Iraq, Browne suggested bolstering the presentation's effect by simultaneously

mounting an I/O campaign. He said this could be done by leaking some of President Talabani's conversations in Tehran and Syria with Iranian officials (Reftel C). For example, IRGC's Quds Force Commander Qassem Suleimani reportedly told Talabani that Tehran supports the killing of British forces. Browne also said we could leak reports that Tehran is working with Sadr to provide JAM leaders with safe havens in Iran.

¶7. (S) The Ambassador said that he is working with Iraqi Foreign Minister Zebari to ensure Iranian diplomats accredited to Iraq are actually diplomats (Reftel B). Zebari recently provided the Embassy with a list of Iranian

BAGHDAD 00000360 002 OF 002

diplomats serving in Iran and has committed to removing anyone identified as a member of Pastran, Quds Force, or MOIS. Those proven to be involved in illegal activities will also be removed. The Ambassador said that he had warned Zebari that Iraqi accreditation of Quds Force personnel would significantly increase the risks of conflict between Vienna Convention and U.S. force protection responsibilities.

¶8. (S) The Ambassador said he was exploring with Washington how to respond to Soleimani's message brought by Talabani. Browne said London could serve as a messenger to Iran, if needed. He recommended that we precondition any talks, asking Iran to take a few concrete steps to demonstrate it is serious about changing its activities in Iraq. Browne suggested demanding that the Iranian Government: publicly state it will stop targeting/attacking Coalition forces; assist the Coalition in identifying nefarious actors; and provide assistance to the GOI for development along the Shatt al Arab waterway. Browne said the waterway commitment would be extremely useful, noting that reconstruction of the ports is virtually impossible at this time because it would require Iraqi "transgression" into Iranian waters.

The Right Time to Pressure Iran

¶9. (S) Browne agreed with the Ambassador's assessment that the timing is right to increase the pressure on Iranian EFP networks. Browne said Iran is increasingly on the defense, noting the recent uptake in domestic and international condemnation of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's strident, belligerent messages; the increased criticism by regional players of Iran's actions that fuel sectarian violence; and the US's recent successful military operations against Iranians linked to EFP networks.

¶10. (S) Browne asked whether the Ambassador was concerned this added pressure might push Iran to escalate its activities in Iraq. While acknowledging that we cannot precisely calibrate the Iranian reaction to our operations, the Ambassador argued that doing nothing seemed more risky. Browne agreed, but cautioned that Iran is an unpredictable and inconsistent actor. The Ambassador concurred, but said that Iran seemed to want to avoid a direct military engagement with the US.

KHALILZAD